

S P E C I F I C A T I O N

GOLF CLUB

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a golf club, and more particularly to a golf club having an improved grip and shaft.

[0002] Many golfers have difficulty in developing and maintaining their swing. Playing well requires a consistent swing, and both effort and discomfort reduce consistency. For example, when hitting a ball, a golfer must have good timing to “follow through” not only with arm motion, but with the shoulder motion. The requirement to combine such motion makes consistency all the more difficult. Further, many beginning golfers have extensive experience playing baseball, and are accustomed to a baseball swing and baseball grip. Known golf clubs are not suitable to such baseball swing and grip, and thus golfers are unable to make optimal use of the skeletal, neurological and muscular parts of the body.

[0003] What is needed are golf club grips which make it easier to improve timing to follow through with the shoulders, and all parts of the body. A sliding grip and/or a baseball grip and swing, will help the whole body to achieve better timing when the club-head makes impact on the ball.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The present invention addresses the above and other needs by providing a golf club which includes an improved grip. The grip may be improved over known grips by including an offset upper portion and/or a sliding grip portion, and/or by providing a shaft with greater flex in an upper shaft portion than in a lower shaft portion. The sliding grip portion is preferably about four inches long and may slide over or rotate clockwise or counter-clockwise around a standard grip or over a guide, and is preferably used with putters, but may be used with other golf clubs such as woods or irons. The offset upper portion defines an approximately eleven inch long upper grip offset at between about two degrees and about twenty degrees from the shaft centerline, and preferably offset about nine degrees. The offset upper portion is preferably clocked between about ninety two degrees and about one hundred and ten degrees counter-clockwise relative to the face of the head, and more preferably about ninety five degrees counter-clockwise relative to the face of the head. Below the grip portion of irons and woods, the shaft may be made to have smaller diameter, thinner material, or different internal structure than the lower shaft portion, to increase the relative flex of the upper shaft portion, and the upper shaft portion preferably has twice the flex of the lower shaft portion.

[0005] In accordance with one aspect of the invention, there is provided an improved golf club comprising a grip, a shaft, a head, and a sliding grip portion adapted to slide on the grip or on a guide or adapted to rotate around the grip or the guide. In one embodiment the sliding grip portion may be limited to slide on an upper grip portion by an upper stop and a lower stop. The sliding grip portion may or may not be keyed to the grip to prevent rotation.

[0006] In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, there is provided an improved golf club comprising a head, a shaft, a grip, and an angularly offset upper grip. The angularly offset upper grip may be permanently or removably attached to the grip, and may be between six and twelve inches long. The angle between a grip centerline and a centerline of the angularly offset upper grip is between two degrees and twenty degrees, and the angularly offset upper grip is clocked counter-clockwise between approximately ninety two degrees and approximately one hundred and ten degrees from a face of the head. A golf club having a angularly offset upper grip may include a sliding grip portion.

[0007] In accordance with still another aspect of the invention directed to irons or woods, there is provided an improved golf club with a shaft having an upper shaft portion with about twice the flex of a lower shaft portion. The desired flex may be obtained by tapering the shaft, by incorporating thicker material into the

lower shaft portion, by including internal structure in the lower shaft portion, or a combination of taper, thickness, and internal structure.

[0008] In accordance with an additional aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for using a putter with a sliding upper grip portion. From the point of view of a right handed player. The method comprises grasping the putter with a cross-handed grip (the left hand grasps the grip on or below a stop, or below the sliding grip, and the right hand grasps the sliding grip above the left hand). The player addresses a ball, points the leading left elbow in the desired direction of the ball, and executes a backstroke. He then swings the club towards the ball, and when the club hits the ball, he uses the right hand to pull the sliding grip away from the lower stop, and completes the swing with the follow through by the right shoulder.

[0009] In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for using a golf club with an angularly offset upper grip portion. The method comprises grasping the angularly offset upper grip with a normal baseball grip, addressing a ball, pointing the leading elbow in the desired direction of the ball, executing a backstroke, swinging the club towards the ball, hitting the ball, and completing the swing.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING

[0010] The above and other aspects, features and advantages of the present invention will be more apparent from the following more particular description thereof, presented in conjunction with the following drawings wherein:

[0011] FIG. 1 shows a golf club with a sliding grip portion.

[0012] FIG. 2 shows details of the sliding grip portion.

[0013] FIG. 2A depicts a cross-sectional view taken along line 2A-2A of FIG. 2 of the cooperation of the sliding grip portion with a guide.

[0014] FIG. 3 shows a golf club with a sliding upper grip.

[0015] FIG. 4 shows details of the sliding upper grip.

[0016] FIG. 4A depicts a cross-sectional view taken along line 4A-4A of FIG. 4 of the cooperation of the sliding upper grip with a guide, wherein a key defined by the sliding upper grip cooperates with a keyway defined by the guide..

[0017] FIG. 4B depicts a cross-sectional view taken along line 4A-4A of FIG. 4 of the cooperation of the sliding upper grip with a guide, wherein a keyway defined by the sliding upper grip cooperates with a key defined by the guide.

[0018] FIG. 4C depicts a cross-sectional view taken along line 4A-4A of FIG. 4 of the cooperation of the sliding upper grip with a guide, wherein the sliding upper grip is free to rotate about the guide.

[0019] FIG. 4D depicts a cross-sectional view taken along line 4D-4D of FIG. 4 of the cooperation of the sliding upper grip with a guide, wherein the guide includes an upper stop and a lower stop to limit the extent of motion of the sliding upper grip.

[0020] FIG. 5 shows a front view of a golf club with an angularly offset upper grip.

[0021] FIG. 5A shows a front view of a golf club with the angularly offset upper grip and the sliding grip portion..

[0022] FIG. 6 shows a top view of the golf club with an angularly offset upper grip.

[0023] FIG. 7 shows a front view of a golf club with a shaft adapted to provide greater flex in an upper shaft portion than in a lower shaft portion.

[0024] FIG. 8 depicts a method of use of a golf club with a sliding grip.

[0025] FIG. 9 depicts a method of use of a golf club with an angularly offset grip.

[0026] Corresponding reference characters indicate corresponding components throughout the several views of the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0027] The following description is of the best mode presently contemplated for carrying out the invention. This description is not to be taken in a limiting sense,

but is made merely for the purpose of describing one or more preferred embodiments of the invention. The scope of the invention should be determined with reference to the claims.

[0028] A golf club 10 with a grip 12 is shown in FIG. 1. A shaft 16 extends from the grip 12 to a head 18 suitable for hitting a golf ball. A sliding grip portion 20 slides over the grip 12 as shown by arrow 22 and may rotate about the grip 12. The lower end of the grip 12 can extend anywhere down the shaft 16 to within fourteen inches of a shank 18a of the head 18. The sliding grip portion 20 is preferably between approximately three and one half inches long to approximately four and one half inches long, and more preferably approximately four inches long. Further, the sliding grip portion 20 is preferably between approximately one inch in diameter to approximately one and one quarter inches in diameter, and more preferably approximately one inch in diameter, and is preferably approximately one sixteenth inch thick. The sliding grip portion 20 may slide along the grip 12 as shown by arrow 22a and rotate about the grip 12 as shown by arrow 22b, which sliding is limited by a stop 30. The stop 30 is preferably generally about eighteen inches above the shank 18a to accommodate a male player of average height, and in a particular embodiment of the golf club 10 well suited for fairway irons and woods, the stop 30 is about ten inches below a grip upper end 36. A detailed view of the grip 12 is shown in FIG.

2. A cross-sectional view of the grip 12 and sliding grip portion 20 taken along line 2A-2A of FIG. 2 is shown in FIG. 2A.

[0029] Another embodiment of the present invention is shown by golf club 10a including the sliding grip portion 20 in FIG. 3. The club 10a includes an upper grip portion 12a comprising a guide 24, and a lower grip portion 12b. The sliding grip portion 20 travels along the guide 24 as indicated by arrow 22, wherein the travel is preferably approximately two inches to approximately three inches, and more preferably approximately two inches. The lower grip portion 12b is preferably between approximately one half inch and one and one quarter inches in diameter, and more preferably approximately one inch in diameter, and may be constant diameter or tapered.

[0030] A more detailed view of the grip portions 12a, 12b are shown in FIG. 4. The guide 24 is preferably constant diameter, and preferably approximately six and one quarter inches in length. A cross-sectional view taken along line 4A-4A of FIG. 4, showing a cooperation of the sliding grip portion 20 with the guide 24, is shown in FIG. 4A. The guide 24 includes a first keyway 28a, and the sliding grip portion 20 includes a first key 26a. The key 26a cooperates with the keyway 28a to prevent rotation of the sliding grip portion 20 relative to the guide 24. The sliding grip portion 20 includes a smooth inner surface 20a and the guide 24 includes a smooth outer surface 24a to facilitate sliding the sliding grip portion 20 on the guide 24.

[0031] A second cross-sectional view taken along line 4A-4A of FIG. 4, showing a cooperation of the sliding grip portion 20 with the guide 24, is shown in FIG. 4B, wherein the sliding grip portion 20 defines a second keyway 28b, and the guide 24 defines a second key 26b.

[0032] A third cross-sectional view taken along line 4A-4A of FIG. 4, showing a cooperation of the sliding grip portion 20 with the guide 24, is shown in FIG. 4C, wherein the sliding grip portion 20 is free to rotate about the guide 24..

[0033] A cross-sectional view taken along line 4D-4D of FIG. 4, showing a cooperation of the sliding grip portion 20 with the guide 24, is shown in FIG. 4D. Upper stop 30b and lower stop 30a are defined on the guide 24, which stops 30a, 30b limit the travel of the sliding grip portion 20 on the guide 24. The stops 30a, 30b are preferably between approximately 1/16 and approximately 1/32 of an inch high, and preferably resemble a bead of weld. Although the embodiment described in FIGS. 3 and 4 includes a guide 24, the sliding grip may also slide over an existing grip 12. The sliding grip portion 20 may be used with a variety of golf clubs, for example, a putter, long and short irons, and woods.

[0034] Yet another embodiment of the present invention is shown by golf club 10b including an angularly offset upper grip 14 as shown in FIG.5 The angularly offset upper grip 14 is preferably between approximately five eighths inches and approximately one and one half inches in diameter and more preferably one inch in diameter, and is preferable between approximately eight inches and

approximately twelve inches long, and more preferably approximately eleven inches long and preferably extends approximately eight inches beyond the grip upper end 36.

[0035] The offset upper grip 14 is attached to the grip 12 near the grip upper end 36, and a centerline 40 of the offset grip 14 is offset by angle 32 from the centerline 34 of the shaft 16. The angle 32 is preferably between approximately two degrees and approximately twenty degrees, and is more preferably approximately nine degrees. The offset grip centerline 40 preferably intersects the shaft centerline 38 between approximately two inches to approximately four inches from the grip upper end 36, and more preferably approximately three inches from the grip upper end 36.

[0036] The offset upper grip 14 may be permanently attached to the grip 12, or be a removable offset upper grip 14 thereby allowing the offset upper grip 14 to be switched between clubs, or removed to allow easier storage of clubs.

[0037] A golf club 10c having both the offset upper grip 14 and the sliding grip portion 20 is shown in FIG. 5A. The sliding grip portion 20 may slide on the offset upper grip 14, or on the grip 12.

[0038] A top view of the club 10b is shown in FIG. 6. The offset upper grip 14 is clocked counter-clockwise by a clocking 34, from face 19 of head 18. The clocking 34 is preferably between approximately ninety two degrees and

approximately one hundred and ten degrees from the face 19, and more preferably approximately ninety five degrees.

[0039] The grip 12 of the golf club 10b may be a standard grip as used on known golf clubs, or may be between nine and ten inches long, have a width between one half inch and one and one quarter inches and preferably one inch, and may be constant width.

[0040] A golf club 10d, preferably an iron or wood, with a second shaft 16a having an upper shaft portion 17a with greater flex, and preferably twice the flex, of a lower shaft portion 17b is shown in FIG. 7. The desired flex may be obtained by tapering the shaft 16a, by incorporating thicker material into the lower shaft portion 17b, by including internal structure in the lower shaft portion 17b, or a combination of taper, thickness, and internal structure. The shaft 16a may be fabricated with the desired flex, or may be modified after fabrication by fusing additional material, for example metal, fiber-glass, or the like, onto or into the lower shaft portion 17b. For example, an aluminum tube may be fused between the shank 18a and a point about twenty inches below the shaft top. As another example, a half tube (i.e., a tube split length-wise) may be fused to one side of the shaft 16b from the shank 18a to a point about twenty inches below the shaft top.

[0041] Preferably, the greater flex of the upper shaft portion 17a is obtained by tapering the shaft 16a, wherein the shaft 16a tapers from its widest diameter at a

junction 18b with the shank 18a, to its narrowest diameter, preferably at a point twelve to twenty inches below the grip upper end 36. The narrowest diameter of the shaft 16a is more preferably at the upper shaft portion 17a which is about three inches in length and located between fourteen inches and sixteen inches below the grip upper end 36. A tapered grip portion 17c extends from the upper shaft portion 17a to within about ten inches of the grip upper end 36, wherein a straight grip portion 17d extends from the tapered grip portion 17c to the grip upper end 36, which straight grip portion 17c is preferably approximately one inch in diameter. The lower shaft portion 17b preferably reduces in diameter between the shank junction 18b (largest diameter) to the upper shaft portion 17a (smallest diameter), and the upper shaft portion 17a preferably has approximately the same diameter as the smallest diameter of the lower shaft portion 17b.

[0042] An embodiment of the golf club 10 of FIG. 1 in which the sliding grip portion 20 is not keyed (i.e., can rotate about the grip 12 or guide 24), and the stopper 30 is about ten inches below the grip upper end 36, is used by a right handed player as follows. Upon addressing the ball, there is no cross-handed placement of the hands. This means that the left hand is positioned on the highest portion of the grip 12, and the right hand is placed on the moving grip portion 20 below the left hand. There is no interlocking of the two hands and no interlocking of the fingers of the two hands. It is essential that the two hands will

function somewhat independently. The left hand grasps the grip 12 firmly, and the right hand grasps the sliding grip portion 20 less firmly. When the club is taken back primarily by the left side of the body, and left arm and hand, the right hand on the sliding grip portion 20 may or may not fractionally slide up toward the left hand, and may or may not rotate fractionally counter-clockwise until the hands cock over the right shoulder to be ready for the return downswing. On the return downswing, the force is primarily from the left side of the body, and arm and hand, but at the point of impact with the ball, the right hand on the sliding grip portion 20 deliberately should be fractionally rotated clockwise. This action by the right hand will help eliminate the common trend of players to tighten the right hand on their club's grip at the point of impact, a tendency which distorts the timing and the hitting surface off the club's alignment to the direction intended.

[0043] A method for using a putter with a sliding upper grip portion to create a lag stroke is described in FIG. 8. The sliding grip provides numerous options for performing the lag stroke, and the following is a preferred option. The left arm and left side of the body provide the power for the lag stroke. The method comprises grasping the putter using a cross-handed grip at step 50. A cross handed grip for a right handed golfer would place the golfer's right hand on the sliding grip portion and the left hand on the stationary lower grip portion. The method further includes holding the sliding grip portion with the right hand against a lower stop at step 52, addressing a ball at step 54, pointing the leading

elbow in the desired direction of the ball at step 56, executing a backstroke at step 58, swinging the club towards the ball at step 60, when the club hits the ball, beginning to pull the sliding grip away as vertically as possible from the lower stop at step 62, and completing the swing with minimum shoulder follow-through at step 64.

[0044] A method for using a golf club with an angularly offset grip portion is described in FIG. 9. The method comprises grasping the angularly offset upper grip using a normal baseball grip at step 70, addressing the ball at step 72, pointing the leading elbow in the desired direction of the ball at step 74, executing a backstroke wherein the left arm is pushing and the right arm is pulling the club back and around the right shoulder whereby the right hand and the left hand will be "cocked" at the top of the backstroke at step 76, swinging the club towards the ball with the left side of the body, left arm, and left hand leading at step 78, hitting the ball at 80, and completing the swing at step 82.

[0045] Those parameters which are opposite for right versus left hand players have been provided above for a right handed player, and the scope of the present invention is intended to include the corresponding values for a left handed player.

[0046] While the invention herein disclosed has been described by means of specific embodiments and applications thereof, numerous modifications and

variations could be made thereto by those skilled in the art without departing from the scope of the invention set forth in the claims.